

Introduction

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is: “an effective and widely used strategy for stress relief that creates a state of deep relaxation by involving alternate tensing and relaxing of muscles” (Sundram et al., 2016).

The section below lists a few scripts for PMR that one can follow. For an idea of what PMR looks like, though, here is a short step-by-step description of the practice (adapted from the PDF from the Centre for Clinical Interventions, the third script listed below). Each muscle should be tensed for about 5 seconds (but not tensed to the point of pain), then relaxed for about 10 seconds:

Source: <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/progressive-muscle-relaxation-pmr/>

When & Why It Is Used In Therapy

Progressive muscle relaxation is useful for conditions which cannot be completely treated through pharmacological means, such as dementia (Ikemata & Momose, 2017). Even for conditions which respond well to pharmacological treatment, “[a] non-drug method of inducing relaxation has little if any risk and therefore may be preferred over drug methods” (Canter et al., 1975). PMR can also be useful as a supplement in cases where someone is undergoing pharmacological treatment, as it is not a pharmacological intervention and does not pose any interaction risks.. While PMR is an effective intervention for a number of conditions (and is even effective for mentally- and physically-healthy people), it can take a lot of therapy sessions to complete. For this reason, researchers have developed abbreviated progressive muscle relaxation (APMR), which can successfully promote relaxation in a single, 20-minute session (Dolbier & Rush, 2012).

Supplementary Treatment

PMR is a particularly useful supplementary treatment for certain psychological conditions. In people trying to quit smoking, PMR has been shown to be effective in reducing withdrawal symptoms such as craving (Limsanon & Kalayasiri, 2015). Another study examining PMR in people with schizophrenia concluded that PMR was a useful “add-on treatment” that could reduce anxiety and stress levels and increase well-being (Vancampfort et al., 2013). These authors also note that PMR can be a useful therapeutic intervention since they found no major adverse effects from PMR, and since PMR can be implemented at “minimal cost”..

Step by Step (cont)

Tense your eyes and cheeks

section 2

Relax your eyes and cheeks
Tense your mouth and jaw
Relax your mouth and jaw
Tense your neck
Relax your neck
Tense your shoulders
Relax your shoulders
Tense your shoulder blades and back
Relax your shoulder blades and back
Tense your chest and stomach
Relax your chest and stomach
Tense your hips and buttocks

Section 3

Relax your hips and buttocks
Tense your right upper leg
Relax your right upper leg
Tense your right lower leg
Relax your right lower leg
Tense your right foot
Relax your right foot
Tense your left upper leg
Relax your left upper leg
Tense your left lower leg
Relax your left lower leg
Tense your left foot
Relax your left foot
Stay relaxed for a bit, then slowly return to daily life

Step by Step

Find a quiet, non-distracting place to relax, either lying down or in a comfortable chair:

Tense your right hand and forearm

Relax your right hand and forearm

Tense your right upper arm

Relax your right upper arm

Tense your left hand and forearm

Relax your left hand and forearm

Tense your left upper arm

Relax your left upper arm

Tense your forehead

Relax your forehead



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